

EPI Update for Friday, June 6, 2008

Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology Iowa Department of Public Health

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **Summer health and safety around the yard**
- **Public health authorities investigating *Salmonella* outbreak**
- ***Salmonella* Hadar & *Campylobacter* associated with travel to Ecuador**
- **Smokefree Air Act draft rules now available**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

Summer health and safety around the yard

Summer is fast approaching and it is time to clean up to eliminate rodents and other pests from your yard and home.

As you're getting ready for summer:

- Fill any gaps or holes inside and outside your home.
- Eliminate or seal rodent food sources such as pet food, bird feeders, and garbage cans.
- Elevate hay, woodpiles, and garbage cans at least one foot off the ground,
- Trim grass and shrubbery within 100 feet of your home.
- Remember to wet down any areas that may have rodent feces prior to cleaning to prevent producing dust and breathing in this dust (as hantavirus is found in Iowa).
- Eliminate insect breeding spots by removing any items that may collect standing water, such as buckets, old tires, and toys. Mosquitoes can breed in them in just days. If you have a bird bath, replace all the water every few days to prevent mosquitoes from breeding in them.
- Reduce the number of ticks around your home by removing leaf litter, brush and woodpiles around your house and at the edge of your yard.
- Replace or repair torn window screens to keep bugs out of the house.
- Stay safe and healthy as you grab your tools and head outside to garden. Wear gloves, glasses and other safety gear when handling equipment and chemicals.
- Protect yourself from sun exposure, and use insect repellent.

Public health authorities investigating *Salmonella* outbreak

Public health officials are investigating a multi-state outbreak of the Saintpaul serotype of the *Salmonella* bacteria. Since April 2008, there have been 70 cases nationwide; 40 cases have been confirmed as part of the outbreak (i.e., have matched by genetic fingerprinting) and 30 cases are pending confirmation. One

case of the Saintpaul strain of the *Salmonella* bacteria has been reported in Iowa; genetic fingerprinting testing to confirm whether this strain matches the outbreak one is ongoing.

Preliminary epidemiological investigations implicate consumption of raw tomatoes as the likely source of infections. Specific types and source of tomatoes remain under investigation.

Salmonella infections can be fatal, symptoms include headache, stomach pain, diarrhea, nausea and sometimes vomiting. The illness usually lasts 4 to 7 days, and most people recover without treatment. In some cases people with severe diarrhea may need to be hospitalized. Dehydration is one of the most common serious consequences, so keeping hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids is very important.

Meanwhile, it is important to:

- Wash your hands thoroughly and often with soap and warm water for at least 15 seconds, especially after going to the restroom, before preparing or serving food and after changing a diaper.
- At this time, people with increased risk of severe infection including infants, the elderly and those with impaired immune systems should not eat any raw Roma or full-sized round tomatoes other than those sold attached to the vine or grown at home.
- Cooking tomatoes at 145 degrees Fahrenheit for at least 15 seconds will kill *Salmonella*.
- Avoid purchasing bruised or damaged tomatoes and discard any that appear spoiled.
- Thoroughly wash all tomatoes under running water.
- Refrigerate within two hours or discard any tomatoes that are cut, peeled or cooked.
- Keep tomatoes that will be eaten raw separate from raw meats, raw seafood and other raw produce items.
- Use separate cutting boards or thoroughly wash cutting boards with hot water and soap when switching between types of food products.

***Salmonella* Hadar & *Campylobacter* associated with travel to Ecuador**

Connecticut has been investigating a cluster of *Salmonella* serotype Hadar and *Campylobacter* infections associated with travel to Ecuador. A group of 12 travelers were part of a high school excursion to Guayaquil, Ecuador, where they stayed at a retreat center during April 11 - April 19, 2008. Upon return to the United States, six travelers developed gastrointestinal illness, with onsets during April 21-27. Of the six ill travelers, one was positive with *S. Hadar*, one with *C. jejuni*, and one co-infected with both. Both *S. Hadar* isolates have the same genetic fingerprint.

Interviews regarding possible exposures were conducted with 10 of 12 travelers. All had visited an iguana park on April 19. Four of six ill travelers reported direct contact (i.e., touched, petted) with the iguanas, compared to zero of four well travelers. (Reptiles are known to carry *Salmonella*.) *S. Hadar* has been associated with reptiles and poultry. *C. jejuni* has also been associated with poultry; in addition to cattle and swine. There have been three cases of *Salmonella* Hadar in Iowa. Investigation of the possible exposure is ongoing.

Smokefree Air Act draft rules now available

The Iowa Department of Public Health has released draft administrative rules that accompany the Smokefree Air Act. The Act, which goes into effect July 1, was signed by Governor Chet Culver on April 15 and protects the health of Iowans by prohibiting smoking in nearly all public places in Iowa. The rules, which will have the authority of law when approved, clarify language not already defined in the legislation and outline how enforcement of the new law will take place.

For more information, visit www.iowasmokefreeair.gov.

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

No meeting announcements this week.

Have a healthy and happy week! And hope you can keep dry!

Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology
Iowa Department of Public Health
800-362-2736